

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

CLAIM STATUS

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. Claims 1-5 and 10-19 have been rejected and claims 6-9 have been objected to by the Examiner. Claims 1, 10, 13, 16 and 19 are independent in form. In the Office Action summary, dependent claim 20 is indicated as being rejected, but no specific reason for the rejection is provided.

Regarding claim 2, the Examiner in ¶10 of the Office Action indicates that the claim is not properly supported in the specification. In response, Applicants agree to cancel claim 2.

New claims 21-24 have been added to further define the invention. No new matter has been added. Support for these claims can be found, by way of example, on page 13, line 26 through page 14, line 6 of the present invention. Applicants believe the matter recited in the new claims is distinct from the prior art.

A. Claim Objections

Claims 6-9 have been objected to by the Examiner as being improper in form because a multiple dependent claim can not depend from another multiple dependent claim. In particular, because multiple dependent claim 5 depends from multiple dependent claim 3. Accordingly, the Examiner did not examine claims 6-9 on their merits for purposes of this Office Action.

In response to the Examiner's objection, Applicants amend claim 6 so that it does not depend from any other multiple dependent claims. Applicants also amend claim 3 to depend

solely from claim 1. In addition, claim 5 is amended to remove reference to cancelled claim 2. Applicants believe such amendment should remove the Examiner's rejection, and claims 6-9 should be allowable.

B. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1 and 10-19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,571,057 to Aoki.

Specifically, the Examiner states that Aoki includes an "optical element (39a-f) which is made from quartz or fluoride [sic] (col.6, lines 43-52). The optical element is disposed in a container for the purpose of subjecting the element to a rinsing system and method." The rinsing system and method comprising, "a first container 10 with a light emitting unit 20 disposed inside the first container, and a second container 53b disposed within the first container and arranged so that the light emitting unit is outside the second container." Wherein the second container, "which houses the optical element, enables irradiation from the light emitting unit from the first container to enter the second container through a glass window 38 located on the second container."

After review of Aoki, it appears that Aoki is directed to a cleaning method for a step-and-scan apparatus used for transferring a pattern on a wafer. In Aoki, the method is presented specifically for cleaning the lenses integrated in the projection optical system. See Aoki column 6, lines 43-52. Aoki does not teach or suggest a second container disposed inside the first container, as the Examiner contends. Applicants believe that the plurality of lens spaces 53a to 53f in Aoki can not be fairly said to be disposed inside the exposure apparatus 10, as the Examiner contends. The configuration of the apparatus in Aoki is very different from the

apparatus disclosed in the present invention.

The present invention is directed towards a system and an apparatus for cleaning individual optical elements in general. The apparatus of the present invention uses two containers (600 and 700 in Figure 1), having different ambiances, to isolate and prevent the optical element from being contaminated after being rinsed. One of the containers comprises a supporting table or a holder for accommodating a portable optical element to be rinsed. See page 14, lines 17-27. The table is designed to accommodate different optical elements, such as lenses or mirrors made from quartz or fluorite. The rinsing method of the present invention is not dependent upon the nature of the optical exposure apparatus into which the optical element to be rinsed will ultimately be incorporated. The rinsing method of the present invention allows the exposure apparatus to use any technology known in the art. See page 24, lines 5-9. Further, since the rinsing method is applied to the optical element only, contamination from materials present in the optical exposure device (e.g. organic substances) does not impact the rinsing process or re-contaminate the optical device according to the present invention.

Thus, the present invention teaches a second container disposed inside a first container and having different ambiances. Applicants believe this claimed element is not taught nor suggested in Aoki. Accordingly, in order to explicitly recite what was already implicit and to further distinguish the present invention from Aoki, Applicants amend claim 1 to clearly indicate that the invention uses two containers, wherein the first container is disposed within the second container. Similarly, Applicants amend claim 13 to add the limitation that the casing includes a first casing and a second casing, such that the second casing is disposed inside the first casing.

Applicants believe that claims 10 and 16 are sufficiently different from Aoki, at least for having a second container disposed inside the first container and believe that such element does

not exist in Aoki. At least for those reasons and the foregoing amendments, Applicants believe that claims 1, 10, 13 and 16 should be allowable.

C. Other Dependent Claims:

Claims 2-5 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,571,057 to Aoki.

Applicants have not independently addressed the rejections of the remaining dependent claims because, as the independent claims from which the dependent claims depend are allowable for at least the reasons discussed *supra*, the dependent claims are believed allowable for at least similar reasons. Applicants however, reserve the right to address such rejections should such response be necessary and appropriate.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-24 are allowable over the prior art of record, taken alone or in combination, and that the respective rejections be withdrawn. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the application is hereby placed in condition for allowance which action is earnestly solicited.

CONCLUSION

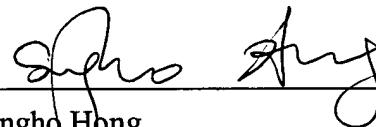
In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application.

Applicants believe no fees are required for this Request for Reconsideration and that no extension of time is required. However, should an extension of time be necessary to render this filing timely, such is hereby petitioned, and the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for this paper, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-4819.

In the event that a telephone conference would facilitate prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided.

Respectfully submitted,
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